

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 HA-05 IO-13 EB-08 OMB-01

TRSE-00 DOE-11 SOE-02 /107 W

-----100926 311742Z /43

R 302225Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7122

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 QUITO 0612

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, MASS, MORG, EC

SUBJECT: US - ECUADOREAN MILITARY RELATIONS

REF: 77 STATE 306726

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NO CURRENT MAJOR US SECURITY INTERESTS IN ECUADOR, THERE DOES EXIST A COMBINATION OF POTENTIAL SECURITY PROBLEMS AND PRESENT OPERATIONAL POLICY BENEFITS DERIVED FROM TIES WITH THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY. THOSE TIES CAN PROBABLY BE MAINTAINED UNDER CURRENT US POLICY, BUT ELIMINATING ALL MILITARY SALES (AS OPPOSED TO ONLY SALES OF SOPHISTICATED OR COSTLY WEAPONS) OR TRAINING WOULD JEOPARDIZE THAT SITUATION. ECUADOR IS NEARING ANTICIPATED END OF MAJOR ARMS PURCHASE EFFORT, WITH MOST PURCHASES COMING FROM THIRD COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY.

2. SECTIONS FOLLOWING ARE KEYED TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN PARA. 2 OF REFTEL.

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3. IMPORTANCE OF TIES WITH HC MILITARY. THE US HAS NO MAJOR SECURITY INTERESTS IN ECUADOR AT THE PRESENT TIME, AND OUR MAJOR INTERESTS ARE IN PURSUIT OF GENERAL FOREIGN POLICY GOALS. NONETHELESS, ECUADOR'S LOCATION ON THE NORTHWESTERN COAST OF SOUTH AMERICA AND ITS POSSESSION OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (SITE OF A WW II US BASE) MIGHT GIVE ECUADOR SOME

STRATEGIC POTENTIAL IN THE EVENT OF GLOBAL WAR. IN ADDITION, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ECUADOR PLAYS A SUBORDINATE BUT STILL IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE CONFLICT POTENTIAL EQUATION IN THE ANDEAN SUBREGION, WHICH COULD PRESENT A SERIOUS SECURITY PROBLEM TO THE US IN THE NEAR TERM FUTURE. EVEN ABSENT SUCH CRITICAL SECURITY CONDITIONS AT THE PRESENT TIME, OUR ABILITY TO ACHIEVE OUR MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY GOALS IN ECUADOR DEPENDS TO A GREAT EXTENT ON A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY. CURRENTLY THE COUNTRY IS RULED BY A TRIUMVIRATE COMPOSED OF THE COMMANDERS OF THE THREE MILITARY SERVICES, BUT UNDER ALMOST ANY CIRCUMSTANCES THE MILITARY WILL HAVE DIRECT INFLUENCE OR CONTROL OVER MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE US. FOR INSTANCE, THE MILITARY HAS A STRONG VOICE IN THE MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT WHICH CONTROLS THE POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THAT MINISTRY CAN AFFECT, FOR GOOD OR ILL, HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES IN ECUADOR. IT WAS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MILITARY THAT ALLOWED THE EMBASSY TO ENGINEER A BUY-OUT OF RATHER THAN UNCOMPENSATED EXPROPRIATION OF GULF OIL CO. ASSETS IN ECUADOR. SIMILARLY, AVOIDING A RECURRENCE OF THE "TUNA WAR" AND ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR BROADER GOALS INVOLVED WITH LOS AND REGIONAL FISHING MATTERS DEPEND TO A LARGE EXTENT ON OUR RELATIONS WITH THE ECUADOREAN NAVY. ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR OBJECTIVES IN DIMINISHING NARCOTICS TRAFFIC WILL ALWAYS DEPEND TO SOME EXTENT ON OUR TIES WITH THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. IRONICALLY, OUR RELATIONS

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WITH THE ARMED FORCES CAN EVEN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON ECUADOR'S RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT.

4. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SUBSIDIARY AREAS WHERE THE US RECEIVES SUBSTANTIAL BENEFIT FROM FRIENDLY TIES WITH ECUADOREAN MILITARY (AND PRESUMABLY THE SAME IS TRUE OF OTHER COUNTRIES). MANY OF THESE WE TAKE FOR GRANTED AND DO NOT RELATE DIRECTLY TO THE MILITARY, BUT THEY ARE SO RELATED. FOR INSTANCE, THE DIRECTORATE OF CIVIL AVIATION HERE IS GENERALLY HEADED BY AN AIR FORCE OFFICER. AMONG THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT DEPEND ON THAT OFFICE WE CAN NOTE NEGOTIATION OF THE BILATERAL AIR AGREEMENT (IN WHICH THE ECUADOREAN FLAG AIRLINE, ALSO HEADED BY AIR FORCE OFFICERS, PLAYS A ROLE), GRANTING OF OVERFLIGHT AND LANDING CLEARANCES AND COOPERATIVE ACTION AGAINST AIR TERRORISM. WE HAVE TRADITIONALLY RECEIVED COOPERATION IN ALL OF THESE AREAS MUCH GREATER THAN THAT ACCORDED OTHER COUNTRIES THAT HAVE RELATIONS WITH ECUADOR, LARGELY BECAUSE OF OUR GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE AIR FORCE. BESIDES THE FISHING QUESTION, THE NAVY CONTROLS SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN ECUADOREANS WATERS, INCLUDING THE GALAPAGOS, AND NEGATIVE RELATIONS COULD MAKE IT VERY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN SUCH

CLEARANCES.

5. THE MILITARY WIELDS STRONG INFLUENCE IN ECUADOR UNDER ANY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. OF COURSE AT THE PRESENT TIME WITH A MILITARY GOVERNMENT, THE MAINTENANCE OF NORMAL BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH ECUADOR DEPENDS TO AN UNUSUAL EXTENT ON OUR RELATIONS WITH THE MILITARY. AT THE SAME TIME, THAT GOVERNMENT HAS NOT VIOLATED PRINCIPLES WHICH WOULD CAUSE US TO DESIRE COOLED BILATERAL RELATIONS. COOL RELATIONS WITH THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY AT THIS TIME WOULD LIMIT THE EMBASSY'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH THE GOE, NOT ONLY ON THE SPECIFIC AREAS NOTED ABOVE, BUT IN THE BROAD RANGE OF RELATIONS. ELECTIONS ARE PLANNED FOR JULY OF THIS YEAR, AND THE RETURN OF CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT MIGHT CHANGE THIS
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PICTURE. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT THE MILITARY WILL RETAIN A SIGNIFICANT LEVEL OF INFLUENCE, AT LEAST IN THE AREAS NOTED IN PARAS. 3 AND 4, EVEN UNDER A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT.

6. CURRENT STATE OF RELATIONS AND IMPORTANCE HC PLACES ON THEM. THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL THREE SERVICES IS GOOD. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FROM THE EARLY-TO-MID 1970S WHEN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL

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SERVICES HAD DETERIORATED, LARGELY AS A FUNCTION OF A GENERAL DETERIORATION OF BILATERAL RELATIONS CAUSED BY THE TUNA WAR AND A PRONOUNCED THIRD WORLD ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE GOE. MILITARY SALES AND TRAINING WERE DISCONTINUED FROM 1970 THROUGH 1974. IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH THE MILITARY SINCE 1974 IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE EMPHASIS THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY PLACES ON MILITARY PURCHASES AND TRAINING AS THE KEYSTONE OF OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. RELATIONS IMPROVED AFTER SALES AND TRAINING WERE RENEWED IN 1975, AND REACHED A HIGH POINT IN 1977 WHEN WE MADE DELIVERY ON CERTAIN OVERDUE MATERIEL FOR THE ARMY AND AGREED TO PROVIDE IT WITH A VARIETY OF ANTI-TANK WEAPONS, AND WHEN WE AGREED TO SELL AN LST AND LATER AN OVER-AGE DESTROYER TO THE NAVY. RELATIONS WITH THE AIR FORCE, WHICH HAD IMPROVED WITH THE 1975 SALE OF A-37 AIRCRAFT AND THE RESUMPTION OF TRAINING, WERE AFFECTED NEGATIVELY BY THE USG VETO OF THE SALE OF THE ISRAELI KFIR INTERCEPTOR TO ECUADOR, AND OUR SUBSEQUENT REFUSAL TO OFFER A COMPETITIVE ALTERNATIVE.

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7. THE KFIR VETO ALSO ILLUSTRATED THE IMPORTANCE THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY (AND BY EXTENTION THE GOE, IN THE CASE OF A MILITARY GOVERNMENT) PLACED ON GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US AND THE US MILITARY. DENIAL OF THE KFIR SALE WAS SEEN AS INTERFERENCE IN ECUADOR'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND A DESTINCTLY UNFRIENDLY ACT. YET AT NO TIME DID THE AIR FORCE COMPLETELY BREAK RELATIONS WITH US BECAUSE THEY WERE RECEIVING BENEFITS FROM TRAINING AND OTHER SALES. ALSO, THE INCIDENT HAD ONLY A MINIMAL EFFECT ON OUR RELATIONS WITH THE ARMY AND NAVY, BOTH OF WHICH WERE IN THE PROCESS OF RECEIVING EQUIPMENT NOTED IN PARA. 6 ABOVE AND WERE NOT ABOUT TO JEOPARDIZE THOSE TRANSACTIONS.

8. APART FROM SUCH INCIDENTS, THE GOE AND THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY DERIVED GREAT BENEFITS FROM A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US AND US MILITARY. THEY SEE BENEFITS OF SUCH A RELATIONSHIP IN LIGHT OF THEIR SECURITY PREOCCUPATIONS AND CONCERN OVER PERUVIAN REARMAMENT. GIVEN THEIR MILITARY INFERIORITY, ECUADOREAN POLICY MAKERS PERCEIVE THAT THEIR ONLY REAL DEFENSE LIES IN THE INFLUENCE OF THE US. THE ONLY OTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILEAN ARMED FORCES, A DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD PRESUMABLY NOT BE IN OUR REGIONAL INTEREST. IT IS ALSO

TRUE THAT ECUADOREANS BELIEVE THAT THE US GENERALLY SELLS THE BEST MILITARY EQUIPMENT (FROM UNIFORMS TO AIRCRAFT) IN THE WORLD, OFFERS COMPETITIVE PRICES, SERVICES WHAT IT SELLS, SUPPLIES ADEQUATE SPARE PARTS AND OFFERS EXCELLENT TRAINING. DEPENDENCE ON THIRD COUNTRIES, EXCEPT FOR THE DUBIOUS BENEFIT OF LIBERAL PAY-OFFS, IS SEEN BY ALL ECUADOREANS WHO DEAL IN SECURITY AFFAIRS AS DISTINCTLY INFERIOR.

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9. ACTIONS UNDER CURRENT POLICY TO MEET MUTUAL NEEDS. IF WE DEFINE CURRENT US POLICY AS MAINTAINING A FORTHCOMING TRAINING PROGRAM (BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL) AND A MILITARY SALES PROGRAM WHICH HELPS ECUADOR MEET SOME OF ITS URGENT MILITARY REQUIREMENTS, AND IF WE DEFINE BOTH OUR AND ECUADOR'S NEEDS AND INTERESTS AS ABOVE, THEN THAT POLICY IS NOW ADEQUATE TO MEET THOSE MUTUAL NEEDS. WE DO NOT HAVE TO SELL SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEMS IN ECUADOR IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A SATISFACTORY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MILITARY, ALTHOUGH WE SHOULD NOT BE UNDER THE ILLUSION THAT OUR FAILURE TO SELL MEANS THEY WILL NOT BUY SUCH SYSTEMS (WITNESS THE MIRAGE PURCHASE).

10. THERE IS, HOWEVER, ONE ACTION WHICH WOULD BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL IN ASSISTING OUR CURRENT POLICY TO ACHIEVE THIS INTENDED EFFECT AND IN PROMOTING A FRIENDLY AND PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY. THAT ACTION IS TO DEFINE IN A COMPREHENSIBLE WAY THE CONTENT OF OUR POLICY. FROM THE ECUADOREAN POINT OF VIEW THAT POLICY NOW APPEARS TO BE DISCRIMINATORY, E.G., IN SPITE OF OUR CLAIMS TO LIMIT ARMS SALES WE CONTINUE TO SELL IN THE MIDDLE AND FAR EAST, RESTRICTING SALES ONLY IN LATIN AMERICA. FROM THE EMBASSY'S POINT OF VIEW, THERE IS NOT CLEAR-CUT DEFINITION OF WHAT WEAPONS WE MIGHT SELL ECUADOR. FOR INSTANCE, SINCE THE USG HAD ONCE OFFERED THE F-5 TO ECUADOR, AND SINCE IT WAS AND IS BEING SOLD BY THE US RATHER WIDELY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, THE EMBASSY QUITE LOGICALLY ASSUMED IT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE FOR ECUADOR AFTER THE KFIR SALE. LIKEWISE, IT WAS ERRONEOUSLY ASSUMED THAT THE SUBSONIC, DEFENSIVE, ANTI-TANK A-10 WOULD BE A SUITABLE ARM FOR ECUADOR. FORTUNATELY THE EMBASSY HEADED OFF REQUESTS FOR BOTH OF THESE, SINCE THE USG ULTIMATELY DID NOT APPROVE THE SALE OF EITHER; AND THE GOE BOUGHT ELSEWHERE. OFTEN, HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY SIMPLY HAS LITTLE GUIDANCE UPON WHICH TO ACT TO DISCOURAGE MANY REQUESTS AT AN EARLY STAGE.

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11. OUR POLICY OF DEALING WITH REQUESTS ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS AND REQUIRING A FORMAL REQUEST FOLLOWED BY DETAILED, OFTEN LENGTHY STUDY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION CAUSES ANOTHER UNINTENTIONAL PROBLEM IN DEALING WITH THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY. IN THE EVENT SUCH A REQUEST IS ULTIMATELY DENIED, IT IS TAKEN AS A CONSCIOUS POLICY DECISION TO BE UNFRIENDLY TO ECUADOR. COULD THE EMBASSY POINT, SOON AFTER AN INFORMAL REQUEST, TO SPECIFIC POLICY GUIDANCE, THIS PROBLEM WOULD NOT OCCUR.

12. MUTUAL INTERESTS AND THE REDUCTION OR ELIMINATION OF ARMS SALES. OUR ABILITY TO MEET OUR AND ECUADOREAN INTERESTS UNDER THESE CONDITIONS DEPENDS ON THE PRECISE DEFINITION OF "ARMS SALES" OR "ARMS TRANSFERS". IF WE MEAN ELIMINATION OF SALE OR TRANSFER OF SOPHISTICATED OR VERY COSTLY WEAPONS SYSTEMS, WHILE CONTINUING TO ALLOW THE SALE OF THE MULTITUDE OF EQUIPMENT AND ARMS WHICH DON'T

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USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 HA-05 IO-13 EB-08 OMB-01
TRSE-00 DOE-11 SOE-02 /107 W
-----101790 311741Z /43

R 302225Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
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FALL IN THAT CATEGORY, THEN WE CAN PROBABLY CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A CLOSE AND VERY PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY FOR A FEW MORE YEARS. WITH A

TRAINING PROGRAM, COOPERATION IN THE FORM OF THIS LIMITED SALES PROGRAM, AND A POLICY OF PROVIDING ADVICE TO THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY, WE WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO CONVINCE THEM OF OUR CONTINUED INTEREST IN AND SUPPORT FOR THEM.

13. IF WE DEFINE THOSE TERMS TO MEAN A PROHIBITION ON THE SALE OF ANY DEADLY WEAPONS AT ALL, WHILE STILL PERMITTING THE SALE OF OTHER EQUIPMENT, WE CAN PROBABLY MAINTAIN SOME PRESENCE HERE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. WE COULD, UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY THAT WOULD ALLOW US, AT A MINIMUM LEVEL, TO PURSUE OUR INTERESTS HERE. WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH A POLICY WOULD ULTIMATELY BE SELF-DEFEATING. IN TIME SUPPLIERS OF ARMS AND MAJOR END ITEMS WOULD ALSO TAKE OVER THE ROLE OF TRAINING AND SUPPLYING ANCILLARY EQUIPMENT, CONFIDENTIAL

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LEAVING US WITH LITTLE SECURITY ASSISTANCE ROLE AND NO BASIS FOR A A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MILITARY.

14. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF WE DEFINED THOSE TERMS AS PROHIBITING THE TRANSFER OF ANY MILITARY EQUIPMENT, OR OF ANY MATERIEL TO AN ARMED FORCE--EVEN IF IT IS NON-MILITARY IN NATURE, THEN IT WILL BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN THE KIND OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY THAT WOULD ALLOW US TO PURSUE OR ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES HERE. IF WE ARE COMPLETELY OUT OF THE BUSINESS OF SELLING MILITARY EQUIPMENT, IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT ANY COUNTRY WILL WANT ADVISE FROM US ON POTENTIAL PURCHASES FROM THIRD COUNTRIES. EXPERIENCE IN ECUADOR IN THE PAST INDICATES THAT THIS IS TRUE.

15. ROLE OF EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, GRANTS, ETC. EXCHANGE PROGRAMS EMPHASIZING ECUADOREAN VISITS TO THE US AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING CAN BE VERY USEFUL IN SERVING BROAD US INTERESTS. OUR EXPERIENCE IS THAT MILITARY OFFICERS WHO HAVE SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME IN THE US ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE PRO-US AND COOPERATIVE WITH US. IT IS OFTEN THROUGH SUCH OFFICERS THAT WE ARE ABLE TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES IN ECUADOR. GOOD EXAMPLES ARE BOTH ADMIRAL OLMEDA AND AIR FORCE BG LUIS ABAD, BOTH OF WHOM HAVE SERVED IN OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS IN WASHINGTON. LONG-TERM TRAINING IS PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE IN THIS AREA SINCE IT ALLOWS GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE US. SUCH PROGRAMS SHOULD INCLUDE AS MUCH EXPOSURE AS POSSIBLE TO US CIVILIAN LIFE AND CIVILIAN POLITICAL PROCESSES. THUS, WE WOULD RECOMMEND THAT SUCH PROGRAMS INCLUDE VISITS TO WASHINGTON AGENCIES OR STATE AND LOCAL CIVILIAN AND GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS.

16. THE EMBASSY WOULD NOTE THAT OTHER TRAINING PROGRAMS,
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PRIMARILY IN TECHNICAL FIELDS, ARE ALSO USEFUL IN MEETING
US OBJECTIVES. THEY ARE SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE THEY ARE OFTEN
THE PROGRAMS THE ECUADOREAN MILITARY IS MOST INTERESTED IN.
ALTHOUGH THEY DO NOT HAVE THE POTENTIAL POLITICAL IMPACT THAT
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING DOES, THEY ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF ZDKES OUR M
ILITARY RELATIONS ACCEPTABLE
AND ESIRABLE TO THE ECUADOREANS. AGAIN, THE KFIR VETO
IS AN INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLE: OUR RELATIONS WITH THE ECUADOREAN
AIR FORCE DURING THE DIFFICULT PERIOD FOLLOWING THAT ACTION
WERE MAINTAINED LARGELY BECAUSE THE AIR FORCE HAD A DEEP
INTEREST IN A NUMBER OF TECHNICAL TRAINING PROGRAMS IN
THE CANAL ZONE.

17. EXPECTATIONS FOR THIRD COUNTRY PURCHASES. THE EMBASSY
HAS ANALYZED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS DATING BACK TO JANUARY
1977 ECUADOR'S PLANNED AND ANTICIPATED PURCHASES OF MAJOR
END ITEMS (76 QUITO 4736, 76 QUITO 8396). WE HAVE
REPORTED THAT ECUADOR WAS IN THE MARKET FOR MAJOR END ITEMS
THAT COULD TOTAL \$1 BILLION, THAT MOST OF THOSE PURCHASES
WOULD BE FROM THIRD COUNTRIES--GIVEN US ARMS SALES
RESTRICTIONS, AND THAT THE MILITARY HOPED TO CONSUMMATE
ALL OF THEM BEFORE THE RETURN TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IN
JULY 1978, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. TO DATE ECUADOR HAS PUR-
CHASED 18 MIRAGE F-1 INTERCEPTORS FROM FRANCE AT A COST
OF SOME \$280 MILLION. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROPOSED
PURCHASE OF SIX CORVETTES FROM ITALY, WITH A POTENTIAL
VALUE OF SOME \$350-400 MILLION, HAS NOT YET BEEN CON-
SUMMATED. ALSO STILL PENDING IS THE DECISION ON AN AIR
DEFENSE MISSILE AND RADAR SYSTEM WHICH COULD GO LO A
EUROPEAN SUPPLIER AND COULD BE VALUED AT UP TO \$500
MILLION.

18. ONCE THESE MAJOR ACQUISITIONS ARE MADE, WE ANTICIPATE
THAT ECUADOR WILL RESTRICT ITS PURCHASES TO ASSORTED SUPPLIES
AND NON-COMBAT EQUIPMENT, AND SPARES AND MAINTENANCE FOR
MAJOR END ITEMS ALREADY IN INVENTORY. MUCH OF THIS WOULD
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PRESUMABLY BE PURCHASED IN THE US, IF WE ARE WILLING TO
SUPPLY IT. THE ONLY MAJOR PURCHASES WE ANTICIPATE FOR THE
FY 79-80 PERIOD ARE HELICOPTERS AND A THIRD C-130 AIR-
CRAFT. AGAIN, THE GOE WOULD PREFER TO PURCHASE THESE ITEMS
IN THE US.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, SECURITY, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978QUITO00612
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780046-0404
Format: TEL
From: QUITO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978017/aaaaafyb.tel
Line Count: 441
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b73f3ce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 9
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: 77 STATE 306726
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3784887
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US - ECUADOREAN MILITARY RELATIONS
TAGS: MPOL, MASS, MORG, EC, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b73f3ce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014